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NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Ten new bird species for Isla del Coco, Costa Rica

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ABSTRACT: We report ten new bird species for Isla del Coco, Costa Rica. All observations were conducted during one-month period (October 2010) during autumn migration of birds to South America. These observations increase the number of bird species recorded on the island to 129.

Isla del Coco is located in the Pacific Ocean (05°31' N, 87°04' W), 494 km southwest of Cabo Blanco, mainland Costa Rica (Figure 1). The island has a land area of 23.85 km^2, and an irregular topography with few small flat areas. The vegetation is dominated by wet tropical and cloud forest types (Slud 1967). The avifauna of Isla del Coco is composed of 13 resident nesting species (eight seabirds and five land birds), and 106 migrant and vagrant species (Montoya 2003; Lopez-Pozuelo and Montoya 2009). The majority of vagrants species are recorded during migration periods (September to November and March to May), and probably are individuals lost during northward or southward migration (Dean and Montoya 2005; Easley and Montoya 2006). In this note we report 10 new bird species from Isla del Coco observed during the autumn migration on October 2010. These observations correspond to species from seven families and four orders, and all records are from migratory species. We identified the birds using binoculars (Nikon 8 x 42) and whenever possible we took pictures of recorded species.

ANATIDAE

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* Linnaeus, 1758 – Four individuals were observed with about 10 Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors* Linnaeus, 1766) foraging and swimming in Genio River, Wafer Bay, on 12 October 2010, at 05:30 h (Figure 2). This group of ducks was regularly observed in the same area until 25 October, when only two individuals were observed. Northern Shoveler is an uncommon to rare migrant in Costa Rica mainland, occurring mainly in the lower Tempisque River basin (Garrigues and Dean 2007).

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca* Linnaeus, 1758 – One individual in non-breeding plumage was observed foraging on a flooded grassland area in Wafer Bay, on 23 October 2010 at 06:15 h and again at 14:00 h. The single individual was foraging close to 10 Blue-winged Teal, one Common Gallinule [*Gallinula galeata* (Lichtenstein, 1818)], one Sora [*Porzana carolina* (Linnaeus, 1758)], two Wilson's Snipes [*Gallinago delicata* (Ord, 1825)], three Baird's Sandpipers [*Calidris bairdii* (Coues, 1861)], one Yellow-headed Blackbird [*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* (Bonaparte, 1826)], 12 Bobolinks [*Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (Linnaeus, 1758)], and several Coco's Finches [*Pinaroloxias inornata* (Gould, 1843)]. Green-winged Teal is very rare migrant on Costa Rica mainland with only six published records since 1962, all from the Pacific slope or Central Valley (Stiles and Skutch 1989; Sandoval *et al.* 2010). We identified the teal based on the presence of a green speculum without a white line, meanwhile all Blue-winged Teals observed flying with the Green-winged Teal presented a light blue speculum with a white line.

RALLIDAE

Sora *Porzana carolina* (Linnaeus, 1758) – One individual was observed in Wafer Bay, on 10 October 2010 at 05:30 h on a flooded grassland (Figure 3), and was observed until 25 October in the same area, mainly from 05:30 to 10:00 h. During all observations the bird foraged close to *Talipariti tiliaceum* var. *pernambucesis* Fryxell, 2001(Malvaceae) bush, which was used as a refuge after foraging or when was disturbed. On the Costa Rican mainland, Sora is a common migrant from October to May in ponds and wetlands throughout the country below 1,500 m elevation (Garrigues and Dean 2007).

SCOLOPACIDAE

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* (Gmelin, 1789) – Two juveniles were observed on 16 October 2010 (Figure 4). Both birds foraged close to a Sanderling [*Calidris alba* (Pallas, 1764)] at the mouth of Genio River during low tide. This species is a common migrant on the Costa Rican mainland from August to May (Garrigues and Dean 2007). We identified the birds by the presence of an evenly barred tail and a slight down-turn in the distal third

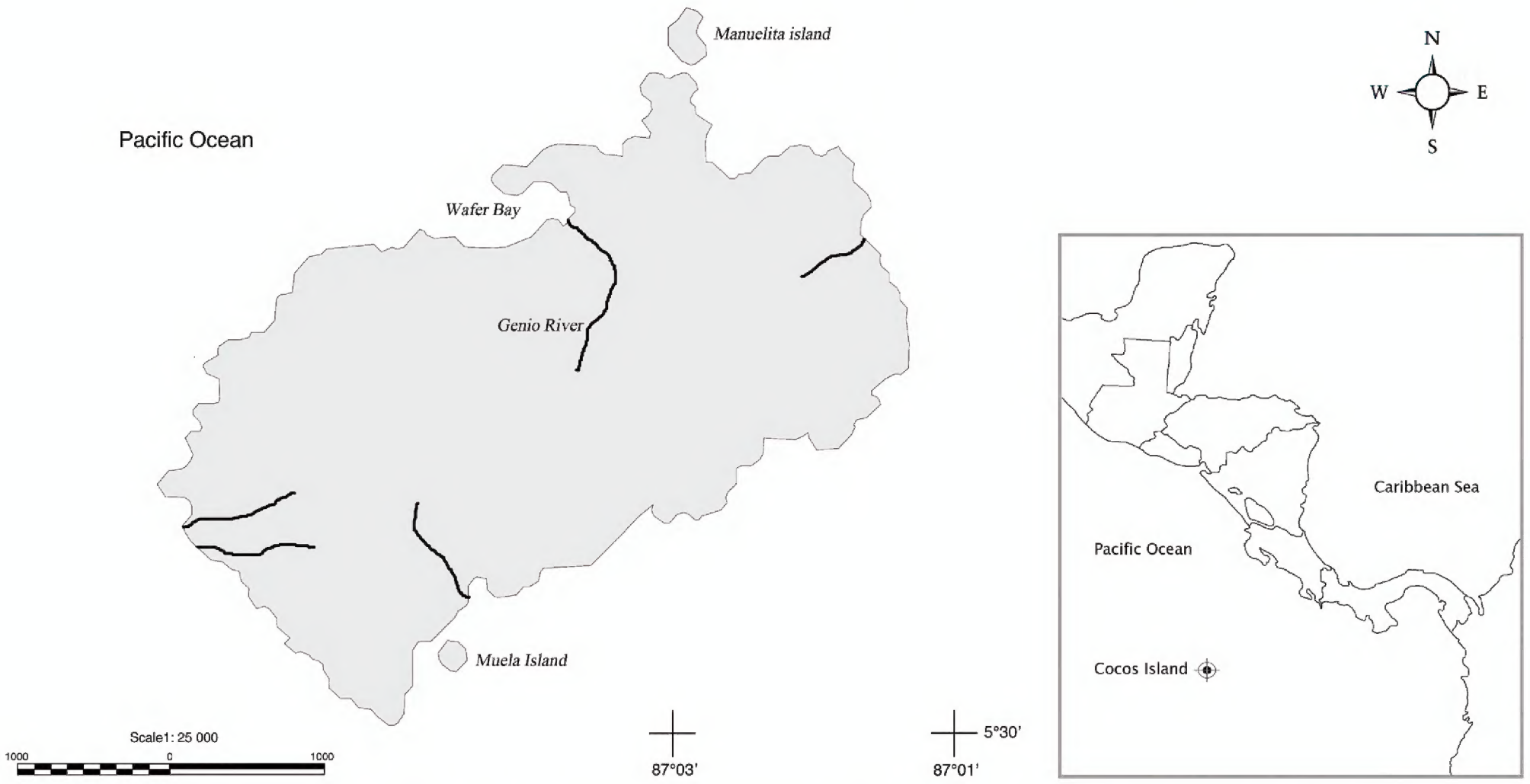

FIGURE 1. Localities mentioned in the text where birds were recorded on October 2010, Isla del Coco National Park, Costa Rica. Map modified from Bogarín *et al.* (2011).

of the bill. Both characteristics are present in the first year juvenile of this species and absent from the similar Long-billed Dowitcher [*Limnodromus scolopaceus* (Say, 1823)] (Chandler 2009).

VIREONIDAE

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons* Vieillot, 1808 – One individual was observed from 5 to 17 October 2010, searching insects on *Persea americana* Mill (Lauraceae) or *Terminalia catappa* L. (Combretaceae) trees close to the beach and the Genio River. On several occasions the bird foraged in close association with Coco's Finches and Yellow Warblers [*Setophaga petechia* (Linnaeus, 1766)]. This vireo is a very common winter resident on the Costa Rican mainland from sea level to 1,800 m above sea level, in secondary forest or open areas with isolated trees (Garrigues and Dean 2007).

PARULIDAE

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata* (Forster, 1772) – One individual in non-reproductive plumage was observed in Wafer Bay from 18 to 19 October 2010 (Figure 5), foraging in a grassland area close to two Tennessee Warblers [*Oreothlypis peregrina* (Wilson, 1811)], one Northern Waterthrush [*Parkesia noveboracensis* (Gmelin, 1789)], one Prothonotary Warbler [*Protonotaria citrea* (Boddaert, 1783)], one Palm Warbler [*Setophaga palmarum* (Gmelin, 1789)], and several Coco's Finches. On the Costa Rican mainland this warbler is a casual to very rare migrant and winter resident (Stiles and Skutch 1989; Garrigues and Dean 2007). We identified the bird by the presence of yellowish legs.

CARDINALIDAE

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra* (Linnaeus, 1758) – The first observation of this species was a female (Figure 6) on 11 October 2010 in Wafer Bay, foraging on the ground with Bobolinks and Coco's Finches. The second observation was a juvenile male (some red feathers in the breast) on 18 October 2010. On 21 October the female was observed again perched on electrical cables. On 28 October we found the female dead on the previous observations area. This species is a common winter resident on the Costa Rican mainland, in secondary forest and open areas with isolated trees such as city parks or gardens (Stiles and Skutch 1989; Garrigues and Dean 2007).

FIGURE 2. Four Northern Shovelers (*Anas clypeata*) and two Blue-winged Teals (*Anas discors*) at Genio River, in a pond close to the river mouth on 16 October 2010. Picture by JAHV.

FIGURE 3. A Sora (*Porzana carolina*) foraging on a flooded land on 23 October 2010. Picture by JAHV.

Figure 4. Two Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) foraging on the beach at Wafer Bay during the low tide, on 16 October 2010. Picture by JAHV.

Figure 5. A Blackpoll Warbler (*Setophaga striata*) foraging in the open area close to the National Park station on 19 October 2010.Picture by JAHV.

Figure 6. A Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) foraging on the ground on 11 October 2010. Picture by Guillermo Blanco.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* (Linnaeus, 1758) – A male was observed on 15 October 2010 at 09:30 h, foraging on the grass. The bird flushed when JAHV approached to take a picture. Close to this male was observed a Painted Bunting male [*Passerina ciris* (Linnaeus, 1758)]. On the Costa Rican mainland this species has both resident and migrant populations (Stiles and Skutch 1989; Garrigues and Dean 2007), however we suggest that our observation is from the migrant population.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* (Linnaeus, 1758) – A male was observed on 15 October 2010, at 09:30 h. The bird was perched on a wire at 2 m height and then flew to begin foraging on the grassy area close to the Blue Grosbeak. Similar to the Blue Grosbeak, this bird flew to a thicket when JAHV approached. On the Costa Rican mainland this species is an uncommon winter resident from October to April in thickets on the Pacific coast lowlands and western portions of the Central Valley (Garrigues and Dean 2007).

ICTERIDAE

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* (Bonaparte, 1826) – A female was observed on 8 October 2010 at 07:00 h (Figure 7). After the first observation the bird was observed regularly foraging in a grassy area close to the Genio River and Wafer Bay station, alone or in association with other resident and migratory bird species. The occurrence of this species in Costa Rica is accidental, with no records in many years (Stiles and Skutch 1989; Garrigues and Dean 2007). We identified the bird by the lack of streaks on the back and lower underparts, that are present on Yellow-hooded Blackbird females [*Chrysomus icterocephalus* (Linnaeus, 1766)] (Angehr and Dean 2010).

These observations increase the number of bird species recorded from Isla del Coco to 129 and show the importance to carry out bird observations there during the autumn migration. Additional observations will likely turn up even more additional species for the island. The large number of migrant species recorded on this island suggests that it may be an important stopover for individuals or small groups that become lost along the migration route to South America. However, for other species, the island could be a trap because they never could leave the island and dead there.

Figure 7. A female Yellow-headed Blackbird (Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus) foraging on the grass in front of the National Park station on 22 October 2010. Picture by JAHV.

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